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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 THE HAGUE 002323

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HHS FOR CMS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: OTRA NL

SUBJECT: COUNTRY CLEARANCE GRANTED FOR HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES OFFICIAL TOD MERKEL - NOVEMBER 5-7, 2006

REF: STATE 178810

¶11. Country clearance is granted for the November 5-7, 2006 visit to the Netherlands of Tod Merkel, Senior Staff Fellow, Center for Biologics Evaluation and Research, FDA, HHS to travel to Bilthoven, the Netherlands to visit the Netherlands vaccine Institute to discuss a planned collaboration on a primate model for pertussis infection.

¶12. Embassy understands that no assistance is required.

POST ACCESS:

¶13. Visitors who need unescorted access into secure areas of the Mission must provide proof of a clearance. If level of clearance was not provided in the original country clearance request it should be done by separate cable. The cable should include SSN, and the name of the agency granting the security clearance. Cables must include the ASEC Tag to ensure distribution to the RSO office.

COMPUTER and ELECTRONICS USAGE:

¶14. Inter-agency security standards prohibit the introduction or use of non-USG owned computer hardware and software at all USG diplomatic facilities. Cell phones, palm pilots, radios and other convenience electronics are prohibited in all secure areas of the Mission.

¶15. Travelers who anticipate having special needs in terms of either access or computer usage should contact the RSO office before arriving at post.

SECURITY ADVISORY:

¶16. Since July 9, 2004, the Dutch Government has implemented heightened security measures in response to concerns of terrorist activity. US citizens in The Netherlands are encouraged to monitor media reports, and are reminded to maintain a high level of vigilance and to take appropriate steps to increase their security awareness.

Tensions in The Netherlands are high, sparked by the November 2, 2004 murder of a Dutch film producer known for his outspoken criticism of Islam; and by the November 10, 2004 raid on a home of suspected terrorists, which led to an all-day standoff and ended with the arrest of three individuals and non-fatal injuries to the suspects and the police. Subsequent arrests were made in connection to this raid and further investigation revealed that these suspects had ties to known terrorist groups. These events initiated a GoN-wide overhaul of its Counter-Terrorism measures, including providing more resources to combat violent Islamic radicalism. There have been a series of protests and arson

attacks directed at mosques and Islamic schools in the Netherlands, plus retaliatory actions against several churches. American citizens should bear in mind that even demonstrations intended to be peaceful can turn confrontational and possibly escalate into violence. American citizens are therefore urged to avoid the areas of demonstrations if possible, and to exercise caution if within the vicinity of any demonstrations.

The U.S. Government remains deeply concerned about the heightened possibility of terrorist attacks against U.S. citizens and interests abroad. As noted in the Department of State's Worldwide Caution of September 10, 2004, terrorists do not distinguish between official and civilian targets. Such targets may include facilities where U.S. citizens and other foreigners congregate or visit, including residential areas, clubs, restaurants, places of worship, schools, hotels and public areas. Terrorist actions may include, but are not limited to, suicide operations, assassination, hijackings, bombings or kidnappings. These may involve aviation and other transportation and maritime interests.

An area of concern for visitors to The Netherlands is crime. Most crimes against officials Americans are limited to pick-pocketing and purse and luggage theft. Theft from automobiles and hotel rooms are not unknown. Recently, theft of laptop computers has increased, especially at Schiphol Airport and major train stations. The thieves operate in small groups that target travelers. They are determined and well-practiced at distraction theft. Official travelers have been victimized, losing personal or unclassified government computers, software and data. Travelers are reminded that regulations require the use of the diplomatic pouch for shipment of classified equipment and information.

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Streets can be walked in relative safety but, as in any U.S. urban area, caution and vigilance should be exercised especially after dark in the more populated cities of The Hague, Amsterdam and Rotterdam. Red-light districts and public transportation hubs are common locations for incidents of street crimes.

For the latest security information, Americans living and traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's Bureau of Consular Affairs Internet web site at <http://travel.state.gov>, where the current Worldwide Cautions, Public Announcements, and Travel Warnings can be found. Up-to-date information on security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S., line at 1-317-472-2328. These numbers are available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays).

Embassy 24-hour contact number if you request further assistance is: (31) (70) 310-2209.

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